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SIR JOSEPH BANKS, K.B.

In a brief memoir of this distinguished naturalist, published some years since, we find the following compendious paragraph :—“ Posterity is likely to do scanty justice to the merits of Banks, when the grateful recollections of his contemporaries shall have passed away. His name is connected with no great discovery, no striking improvement; and he has left no literary works from which the extent of his industry, or the amount of his knowledge, can be estimated. Yet he did

Sir Joseph was descended from a family tracing its pedigree back to the reign of Edward III. The date of his birth has been variously stated; but, according to his baptismal register, he was born January 4, 1743, in Argyle-street, St. James's, Westminster. Sir Everard Home, in the Hunterian Oration, delivered in the theatre of the College of Surgeons in 1822, furnished some interesting particulars respecting the early life of Sir Joseph. After receiving rudimentary instruction



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much for the cause of science,—much by his personal exertions, more by a judicious and liberal use of the advantages of fortune. For more than half a century a zealous and successful student of natural history in general, and particularly of botany, the history of his scientific life is to be found on the records of science during that long and active period.” We have, however, gleaned a few particulars which may prove interesting to our readers.

from a private tutor, he was sent to Harrow School when nine years of age, and at thirteen he was removed to Eton. A tutor described him as so immoderately fond of play, that his attention could not be fixed to study. At fourteen, however, he began to devote his leisure hours to reading; the reason for this change he afterwards explained thus: One fine summer evening he had bathed in the river as usual, but having stayed a long time in the water, he found, when he

came to dress, that all his companions were gone. He was walking leisurely along a lane, the sides of which were richly enamelled with flowers; he stopped, and looking round, involuntarily exclaimed, "How beautiful!" After some reflection, he said to himself, "it is surely more natural that I should be taught to know all these productions of nature, in preference to Greek and Latin; but the latter is my father's command, and it is my duty to obey him: I will, however, make myself acquainted with all these different plants for my own pleasure and gratification." In how many instances has what is usually termed accident fixed the character and pursuits of a man for life. So it was here: Joseph began immediately to teach himself botany. For want of more able tutors at that time, he submitted to be instructed by some women who collected herbs and flowers for the druggists and apothecaries, and paid them sixpence for every material piece of information. While at home for the ensuing holidays, he obtained an old copy of *Gerard's Herbal*, in which he was delighted to find a description of all the plants he had met with, with the addition of representations by engravings: this book he carried with him to school.

When he was in his eighteenth year, Joseph was entered a gentleman commoner at Christ Church, Oxford; this was in 1760. Here his love of botany increased, and he added to it the study of the other branches of natural history. He succeeded in forming a class of students in natural history, under the tuition of Mr. Israel Lyons, a botanist and astronomer. Mr. Banks soon distinguished himself by his superior knowledge in what had now become his favourite study. On some occasions, when parties of students were discussing the merits of some Greek author, they would exclaim, "Here comes Banks, but he knows nothing of Greek," he made no reply, but said to himself, "I will very soon excel you in another kind of knowledge, which I deem of greater importance;" and not long after, when any of them wanted to clear up a point of natural history, they said, "We must go to Banks."

In 1763, he took an honorary degree and left Oxford. In 1764, he came of age, and, his father having died, took possession of his paternal fortune. In 1766 he was chosen into the Royal Society. In the summer of that year he went to Newfoundland with his friend Lieutenant Phipps, for the purpose of collecting plants; and returned to England the following winter by way of Lisbon. About this time he formed an intimacy with Dr. Solander, a Swedish gentleman, the pupil of Linnaeus, who had been recently appointed an assistant librarian of the British Museum. For three or four years he was assiduously employed in the objects of his established pursuit. The commencement of a new reign, the peace of 1763, and the administration of Lord Bute, a lover of science, was marked in England by public efforts to explore those parts of the ocean which were either wholly unknown or only partially discovered. The South Sea had been visited by Captain Wallace, and the position and general character of the island of Otaheite being ascertained, and the English astronomers considered that spot peculiarly favourable for observing the transit of the planet Venus over the disc of the sun. This subject was brought before the government by the Royal Society, and the plan of a general voyage of discovery, embracing particularly the object of the visit to Otaheite, was arranged, and the lords of the admiralty commissioned the Endeavour, under the command of Captain Cook, for the projected service. Banks, in conjunction with Dr. Solander, was appointed naturalist to the expedition, and, attended by two draughtsmen and four servants, he sailed from Plymouth Sound, August 26, 1768.

On arriving at Terra del Fuego they obtained a splendid variety of botanic specimens; and afterwards at Otaheite, during a space of four months, acquired an intimate knowledge of the natural history of the interior, as well as of the shores and waters of the island. The commanding appearance of Mr. Banks, together with his frank and open manners, and sound judgment, speedily obtained for him the regard and deference of the natives. The expedition, after traversing the seas surrounding New Zealand and New South Wales, came homeward by way of Batavia and reached the Downs in June,

1771. Mr. Banks was received with the highest marks of respect, and was honoured with a private interview with His Majesty (George III.), who conceived a liking for the young traveller, which continued unimpaired to the close of his public life.

Notwithstanding the privations and dangers of his first voyage, he was induced to offer his services a second time to the government. The offer was accepted; but in consequence of difficulties placed in his way by the comptroller of the navy, he relinquished the voyage. He, however, exerted himself in every way to promote its objects, and he afterwards purchased the drawings made by Mr. Forster, who had accepted the appointment, and placed them in his own library.

In 1772, Mr. Banks, in company with his friend Dr. Solander, made a voyage to Iceland, during which they were induced to examine the Hebrides. Mr. Banks furnished a very interesting account of the columnar stratification of the rocks surrounding the caves of Staffa; and added to his collection a great number of new botanical specimens, and a large quantity of Icelandic books and manuscripts, which he afterwards presented to the British Museum.

Sir John Pringle having retired from the presidency of the Royal Society in 1777, Mr. Banks was unanimously elected to the vacant chair; and in 1778, in which year also he was created baronet, he entered upon the duties of his office with the utmost zeal. He soon succeeded in obtaining important communications, and the accession of many persons of rank and talent as members. From this time he gave up all idea of leaving his country, and began to prepare for publication the rich store of botanical materials he had collected. In this work he had reckoned on the assistance of his friend and fellow-labourer, Dr. Solander, but that gentleman having died suddenly, in 1782, Sir Joseph abandoned his intention, and wrote nothing farther than a few short memoirs and papers, published chiefly as communications to the transactions of societies.

In 1784 some serious misunderstandings took place in the Royal Society, which for some time interrupted the tranquillity of the president. The discontent, founded as it should seem, upon misunderstanding and prejudice, at length broke out, and on the evening of January 8, a resolution "That this Society do approve of Sir Joseph Banks for their President, and will support him," was moved in a very full meeting of the society by Sir Joseph's friends. It was strenuously opposed by several members, and among the rest by Dr. Horsley, afterwards Bishop of St. Asaph, who, having been interrupted in his speech, and irritated by a suggestion from Lord Mulgrave, intimated a threat of seceding, and forming a rival society. "Sir," said Dr. Horsley, in conclusion, "when the hour of secession does come, the president will be left with his train of feeble amateurs, and that toy—pointing to the mace on the table—the ghost of that society in which philosophy once reigned, and Newton presided as her minister." The motion made in favour of Sir Joseph was, however, carried by a large majority, and the dissension soon after subsiding, the society returned to its labours with new zeal and unanimity.

Sir Joseph Banks was invested with the Order of the Bath in July, 1795, and in March, 1797, was sworn of the English privy council. In 1802, he was chosen a member of the National Institute of France. Towards the close of his life, he was grievously afflicted by gout, which deprived him, to a considerable extent, of the use of his lower extremities. He endured his pains with much patience and cheerfulness, and died at his seat in Spring-grove, Middlesex, June 19, 1820, in the 77th year of his age.

In addition to his labours for the Royal Society, of which he was president for upwards of forty years, he took a leading part in the management of the Royal Gardens at Kew, near London. He was a distinguished promoter also of the interests of the Horticultural Society, founded in 1804. In addition to this, he was indefatigable as an official trustee in the management of the British Museum; to which institution, after innumerable gifts, he made a contingent bequest of his scientific library,

together with his foreign correspondence, where both are now deposited. Most of the voyages of discovery, which were made under the auspices of government for the last thirty years of Sir Joseph Banks's life, had been either suggested by him, or had received his approbation and support. The African Association owed its origin to him; and Ledyard, Lucas, Houghton, and Mungo Park, all partook of the care which he extended to enterprising travellers.

The published writings of Sir Joseph Banks are no numerous. They consist of papers in the "Philosophical Transactions;" "The Archaeologia;" the "Transactions of the Horticultural Society;" and other periodical works, and two single tracts, one on the causes of disease in corn, the other on the breed of Merino sheep. He possessed a noble library of works on "Natural History," of which an admirable catalogue, in five volumes octavo, was compiled by his librarian, Mr. Dryander. A beautiful marble statue, by Chantry, was executed by subscription, and presented to the British Museum: it is placed in the hall of that institution.

BLACK GUARD.

THE passages in Butler and Fuller, in which this word occurs, refer obviously to a popular superstition, during an age when the belief in witchcraft and hobgoblins was universal; and when such creatures of fancy were assigned as *blackguards* to his Satanic majesty. "Who can conceive," says Fuller, "but that such a prince-principal of darkness must be proportionally attended by a black guard of monstrous opinions?" Hudibras, when deceived by Ralpho counterfeiting a ghost in the dark,—

"Believed it was some drolling sprite
That staid upon the guard at night,"

discourses with the squire as follows:—

"I do believe thee, quoth the knight;
Thus far I'm sure thou'rt in the right,
And know what 'tis that troubles thee,
Better than thou hast guess'd of me.
Thou art some paltry, *blackguard* sprite,
Condemn'd to drudg'ry in the night;
Thou hast no work to do in th' house
Nor half-penny to drop in shoes;
Without the raising of which sum
You dare not be so troublesome;
To pinch the slatterns black and blue,
For leaving you their work to do.
This is your business, good Pug Robin,
And your diversion, dull dry bobbing."

It will be seen that Butler, like Fuller, uses the term in the simple sense as a *guard* of the Prince of Darkness. But the concluding lines of Hudibras's address to Ralpho explain the process by which, at a late period, this term of the *black guard* came to be applied to the lowest class of domestics in great establishments.

The black guard of Satan was supposed to perform the domestic drudgery of the kitchen and servants' hall, in the infernal household. The following extract from Hobbes refers to this:—

"Since my Lady's decay, I am degraded from a cook; and I fear the Devil himself will entertain me but for one of his *black guard*, and he shall be sure to have his roast burnt."

Hence came the popular superstition that these goblin scullions, on their visits to the upper world, confined themselves to the servants' apartments of the house which they favoured with their presence, and which at night they swept and garnished; pinching those of the maids in their sleep who, by their laziness, had imposed such toil on their elfin assistants; but slipping money into the shoes of the more tidy and industrious servants, whose attention to their own duties before going to rest had spared the goblins the task of performing their share of the drudgery.

This belief in the visits of domestic spirits, who busy themselves at night in sweeping and arranging the lower apartments, has prevailed in the North of Ireland and in Scotland from time immemorial: and it is explained in Sir Walter Scott's notes to the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," as his justification for introducing the goblin page, Gilpin Horner, amongst the domestics of Branksome Hall. Perhaps, from the association of these elves with the lower household duties, but more probably from a more obvious cause, came at a later period the practice described by Gifford in his note on Ben Jonson, by which—

"in all great houses, but particularly in the royal residences, there were a number of mean dirty dependents, whose office it was to attend the wool yard, sculleries, &c. Of these, the most forlorn wretches seem to have been selected to carry coals to the kitchens, halls, &c. To this smutty regiment, who attended the progresses, and rode in the carts with the pots and kettles, the people, in derision, gave the name of the *black guards*."

This explains the force of the allusion, in Jardine's "Criminal Trials," to the apartments of Euston House being "far unmeet for her highness, but fitter for the black guard"—that is, for the scullions and lowest servants of an establishment. Swift employs the word in this sense when he says, in the extract quoted by Dr. Johnson in his "Dictionary" in illustration of the meaning of *blackguard*,—

"Let a black-guard boy be always about the house to send on your errands, and go to market for you on rainy days."

It will thus be seen, that no author of a remote period makes use of the term *black guard* in an opprobrious sense such as attaches to the more modern word "*blackguard*"; and that they all wrote within the first fifty years of the seventeenth century. It must, therefore, be subsequent not only to that date, but to the reign of Queen Anne, that we are to look for its general acceptance in its present contumelious sense. Its introduction may be traced to a recent period, and to a much more simple derivation than that hitherto investigated.

We apprehend that the present term, "a *blackguard*," is of French origin; and that its importation into our language was subsequent to the Restoration of Charles II., A.D. 1660. There is a corresponding term in French, *blague*, which, like our English adaptation, is not admissible in good society. It is defined by Bescherelles, in his great "Dictionnaire National," to mean "fanfaronnade, hablerie, mensonge; bourde, gasconade;" and to be "un mot populaire et bas, dont les personnes bien élevées évitent de se servir." From *blague* comes the verb *blaguer*, which the same authority says means "dire des blagues; mentir pour le plaisir de mentir." And from *blagueur* comes the substantive *blagueur*, which is, we apprehend, the original of our English word *blackguard*. It is described by Bescherelles as a "diseur de sornettes et de faussetées; hableur, fanfaron. Un *blagueur* est un menteur, mais un menteur qui a moins pour but de tromper que de se faire valoir."

The English term has, it will be observed, a somewhat wider and more offensive import than the French: and the latter being rarely to be found amongst educated persons, or in dictionaries, it may have escaped the etymologists who were in search of a congener for its English derivative. Its pedigree is, however, to be sought in philological rather than archaeological records. Within the last two centuries, a number of words of honest origin have passed into an opprobrious sense; for example, the oppressed tenants of Ireland are spoken of by Spenser and Sir John Davies as "*villains*." In the English version of the Scriptures, "*cunning*" implies merely skill in music and in art. Shakspeare employs the word "*vagabond*" as often to express pity as reproach; and I think it will be found, that as a *knav*, prior to the reign of Elizabeth, meant merely a serving man, so a *blackguard* was the name for a pot-boy or scullion in the reign of Queen Anne. The transition into its more modern meaning took place at a later period, on the importation of a foreign word, to which, being already interchangeable in sound, it speedily became assimilated in sense.—*Notes and Queries*.